AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1.   (Currently Amended) A bill acceptor for a gaming machine, the bill acceptor comprising

a receiving zone for receiving a bill;

a sensing device at an input region of the receiving zone for sensing at least one characteristic of the bill;

a controller in communication with the sensing device for receiving an output signal from the sensing device; and

an annunciator controlled by the controller to be activated when a bill acceptance rate of the controller drops below a predetermined threshold <u>the annunciator being arranged in the receiving zone</u>.

2.   (Original) The bill acceptor of claim 1, in which the receiving zone incorporates a platen on which the bill is received and a slot at an end of the platen into which the bill is to be inserted.

3.   (Original) The bill acceptor of claim 2, in which the sensing device is arranged inwardly of the slot.

4.   (Original) The bill acceptor of claim 1, in which the sensing device senses at least one of optical, magnetic and dimensional characteristics of the bill.

5.   (Previously Presented) The bill acceptor of claim 2, in which the receiving zone includes an indicator for indicating to a patron where the bill is to be inserted into the slot.

6.   (Previously Presented) The bill acceptor of claim 5, in which the indicator comprises an array of illuminating elements arranged in the platen of the receiving zone.

7.   (Currently Amended) The bill acceptor of claim 6, in which <u>the illuminating elements function as</u> the annunciator ~~is arranged in the receiving zone~~.

8. (Original) The bill acceptor of claim 7, in which the controller causes the array of illuminating elements to be illuminated in a predetermined, first pattern and the annunciator is implemented in the form of an illumination of the illuminating elements in a second, different pattern.

9. (Original) The bill acceptor of claim 8, in which the second pattern is activated after completion of the first pattern when the bill acceptance rate has dropped below said predetermined threshold.

10. (Previously Presented) The bill acceptor of claim 1, in which, when the controller is connected to a network, a network monitoring system monitors the acceptance rate of bills by the controller and activates an alarm when the acceptance rate drops below the predetermined threshold.

11. (Currently Amended) A method of operating a bill acceptor of a gaming machine, the method including the steps of:
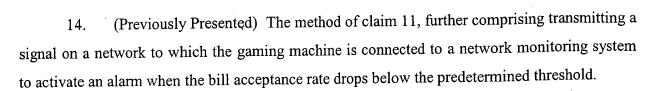
   sensing at least one characteristic of a bill inserted into the bill acceptor;

   monitoring a bill acceptance rate by a controller; and

   activating an annunciator <u>arranged in a receiving zone of the bill acceptor</u> when the bill acceptance rate drops below a predetermined threshold.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, further comprising energising illuminating elements of the bill acceptor in a predetermined pattern and, when the bill acceptance rate drops below the threshold, energising the illuminating elements in a second, different pattern, the second pattern of illumination of the illuminating elements serving as the annunciator.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, in which the second pattern of illumination of the illuminating elements follows completion of the first pattern.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, further comprising transmitting a signal on a network to which the gaming machine is connected to a network monitoring system to activate an alarm when the bill acceptance rate drops below the predetermined threshold.

15. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine network comprising a plurality of gaming machines wherein each gaming machine includes a bill acceptor that has a receiving zone for receiving tendered bills and <u>annunciator arranged in the receiving zone to be activated when a</u> <u>bill acceptance rate of the annunciator drops below a predetermined threshold</u> ~~a sensing device in~~ ~~the receiving zone for sensing at least one characteristic of the tendered bills~~, wherein the gaming machine networks receives signals from ~~the~~ <u>a</u> sensing device <u>of the bill acceptor</u> so as to be able to ascertain ~~a~~ <u>the</u> bill acceptance rate.

16. (Previously Presented) The gaming machine network of Claim 15, wherein each of the plurality of gaming machines includes a controller that is in communication with the sensing device and wherein the controller determines a bill acceptance rate of the tendered bills and communicates the bill acceptance rate to the gaming machine network.

17. (Cancelled) ~~The gaming machine network of Claim 16, further comprising an~~ ~~annunciator that is activated when the bill acceptance rate drops below a predetermined~~ ~~threshold.~~

18. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine network of Claim <u>15</u> ~~17~~, wherein <u>an</u> ~~the~~ annunciator is provided at <u>each of</u> the gaming machines.